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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE
WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 24 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I write to draw your attention to the attached document, entitled "Priority actions for implementation by Parliaments of the results of the World Summit for Social Development", produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and approved at the 159th session of its governing body, the Inter-Parliamentary Council, in Beijing on 21 September 1996.

Since you have so personally sought to stimulate Governments and civil society globally in the fight against poverty and in the implementation of the main objectives of the World Summit, you may agree that this series of recommendations offers yet another tool for mobilizing political will and public support to this end. On the other hand, they constitute yet another indication of civil society's own activism in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

I should like to ask that the above-mentioned document be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 45.

(Signed) Juan SOMAVÍA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY PARLIAMENTS OF THE RESULTS OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Findings and Recommendations of the Inter-Parliamentary Council
159th session, Beijing, 21 September 1996

The present findings and recommendations are based on the report of a ***Tri-Partite Meeting of Parliamentary, Governmental and Inter-Governmental Representatives*** *which took place at UN Headquarters on 5 and 6 September 1996. The meeting had been organized by the IPU in co-operation with the UN Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme to establish a set of priority actions and steps to be taken by national parliaments for the effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development.*

Background information on the Tri-Partite Meeting is contained in the Appendix.

The report of the meeting was considered in depth by the Executive Committee at its 223rd session in Beijing on 13 September 1996. On the proposal of the Executive Committee, the ***Inter-Parliamentary Council,*** *at its 159th session on 21 September 1996, unanimously endorsed the findings and recommendations which are contained in this document. The parliaments of the following 118 countries were represented at the Council session in Beijing:*

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zimbabwe.

ROLE AND COMPETENCE OF THE PARLIAMENT IN THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE WSSD

1. Commitments at the World Summit for Social development (WSSD) were made by Governments representing each State. The realization of those commitments, therefore, calls for the involvement of all branches of the State structure, including the national Parliament, as well as civil society as a whole. Indeed, the commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups are critical to the realization of the goals of the World Summit.

2. In every State, the national Parliament is the very embodiment of civil society. Its fundamental role is to represent and express the will of the people at State level. The Parliament, made up of men and women who are elected by the citizenry at large and are in direct contact with the population and associations of their constituencies, is the most natural and legitimate institution to represent the common interest of the various components of civil society.

3. Action by the Parliament and its members is crucial not only for the implementation of social development policies and programmes, but also for relaying and explaining to the public the issues involved and forging popular support for such action. Public awareness of social problems and public discussion and promotion of policies to address them are pre-requisites for problem-solving and, through direct and continuous dialogue with their constituents, members of Parliament are well placed to create awareness and discussion and place social development issues high on the national agenda. Moreover, the Parliament provides institutional and direct popular participation in the parliamentary decision-making process through hearings and parliamentary enquiries.

4. Parliament plays a crucial role in enacting legislation in every field and is therefore also indispensable as the vehicle which provides the legislative framework for social development. It does so through the ratification of relevant international conventions and agreements, the adoption of implementing legislation, the enactment of new laws and the harmonization of existing laws, and of course through the adoption by Parliament of the national budget. Each nation's Parliament also exercises Executive oversight. Through a variety of mechanisms, parliaments and their members are in a position to influence and prompt governmental action to realize the goals set at the WSSD and monitor their implementation.

5. It is also a fact that, through the attention they give to social development, parliaments contribute to ensuring that this question remains at the heart of the national political debate and stimulate further thinking on those problems on which the Social Development Summit reached no final conclusion.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

6. The Declaration and Programme of Action of the WSSD put *poverty eradication*, *productive employment* and *social integration* at the centre of the political agenda as the three basic goals to be achieved. The ten commitments endorsed at the Summit can be summarized in two categories - commitments to strategies which essentially seek to establish an enabling environment for social development, and commitments to the above three goals.

Section 1. An enabling environment for social development

7. The creation of the appropriate political, economic, social, cultural and legal environment at national and international levels underpins the ability of societies to achieve social development. In particular, the development and effective use of human resources are of central importance. This requires appropriate provision for education, health and other measures as well as efforts to ensure that optimum use is made of available indigenous expertise in social development. The WSSD reiterated key principles and actions that will be required to achieve the goals of the Summit. These include:

(a) The full and active participation of civil society

8. The Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Summit highlight the importance of creating or improving the environment so as to make possible the full and active participation of civil society in social development. **In this regard, parliaments should, *inter alia*:**

- **Ensure a stable legal framework to promote full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, access to justice, transparent and accountable governance and partnerships with representative organizations of civil society; such a legal framework should take special account of disadvantaged persons and groups;**

- **Introduce legislation to eliminate gender inequality in all spheres and set up measurable targets and monitor them to correct imbalances in the participation of men and women in decision-making at the political level and, to this end, promote affirmative action for women;**

- **Promote decentralization and open management of public institutions, strengthen the role of community organizations in policy making and implementation, encourage and support the creation of such organizations, especially among the disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the population, and ensure that people's initiatives and participation become the key element in the development process.**

(b) A stable environment for growth

9. The Summit recognized that creating an enabling environment for growth is a priority. There is broad consensus today that a stable macroeconomic policy framework at the

global level is very important for stimulating employment-intensive growth which allows for as many people as possible to climb out of poverty, unemployment and social deprivation. **To this end, parliaments should:**

- **See to it that a stable macroeconomic policy framework is established which will include controlling inflation, liberalizing trade, promoting agricultural production, freeing the prices of agricultural products, encouraging the rural sector, removing constraints on labour markets such as restrictions on labour mobility and ensuring that subsidy systems benefit the needy;**

- **More particularly, determine the nature, content, speed and the modalities of these measures, monitor their progress and insist that obstacles in the way of implementation are removed and that the executing agencies are provided with the necessary human and financial resources;**

- **Promote social dialogue between workers, employers and governments.**

(c) Combat socially disruptive conditions

10. Almost every society is afflicted by socially disruptive conditions which are impediments to human development and which require action also by parliaments and their members. Among these are corruption, violence and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, often also linked to narcotics trafficking.

- **Parliaments should encourage public denunciation and condemnation of corruption, enact or strengthen laws for the prevention of all forms of corruption, and establish standards of conduct for persons holding public office. Parliaments should take the lead in analysing the causes of corruption and their international linkages and encourage governments to develop international co-operation to fight corruption;**

- **Parliaments should enact or strengthen laws to fight organized crime and violence, terrorism, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in human beings and all forms of child abuse;**

- **Parliaments should similarly enact and strengthen laws to combat and prevent narcotics trafficking and, in particular, to ensure the seizure and forfeiture of the proceeds acquired through such trafficking.**

(d) Resource mobilization for social development

11. No new resources were committed at the WSSD to finance the Programme of Action, although various proposals to raise funds were put forward with the request that Governments consider them. **In order to mobilize additional resources and ensure more effective use of available resources for social development, parliaments should, in particular:**

- **Probe continuously current patterns of public spending to ensure that they are biased neither against the poor or vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, nor towards vested interests;**

- See that governments in both developed and developing countries re-direct existing expenditures, such as excessive military expenditure - taking into consideration national security requirements - towards social development activities and development assistance, and explore innovative ways of financing social development (imposition of user fees on higher services has been suggested as one of the ways; exemptions or subsidies for the poor and student loan schemes, etc., would have to be implemented to ensure that the poor have access to these services);

- Promote mobilization and effective and systematic use of indigenous expertise and local and community-based social organizations in devising social development strategies and approaches appropriate to particular situations, cultures and conditions while, at the same time, recognizing the value of exchange of expertise;

- Take the lead in reshaping budgets so as to give priority to basic social services such as primary education, primary health care including reproductive health and family planning services, nutrition, drinking water supply and sanitation - basic services which are more directly beneficial to the poor than higher services - and monitor continuously investment in these sectors;

- Influence governments to shift resources to the sector of the workforce where most of the poor are located (agricultural sector in Africa and South Asia and urban informal sector in Latin America have been cited as examples);

- Promote the 20:20 compact which calls for interested donor and recipient countries to allocate a minimum of 20% of official development assistance (ODA) and 20% of national budget to basic social programmes including basic education, primary health care, safe drinking water, family planning services and nutrition programmes;[1]

- Probe levels of official development assistance, call on governments to fulfil the agreed target of 0.7% of Gross National Product for ODA as soon as possible and monitor progress in reaching this target;

- Ensure that governments speedily implement debt relief agreements and negotiate further initiatives, including for multilateral debt, to alleviate the debts and debt servicing of the poorest and most heavily indebted low-income countries.

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[1] The Oslo Consensus on 20/20 (Conference hosted by the Norwegian Government with representatives from donor countries, recipient governments and international institutions, held in Oslo, 23-25 April 1996) recognized that basic social services play a particularly important role in reducing the worst aspects of poverty, and called on governments to adopt the compact as a mutual commitment to poverty reduction strategies.

Section 2. Priority actions required to attain the goals

(a) Actions to be taken in order to attain the goal of poverty eradication

12. The WSSD put poverty on the political agenda in all countries and internationally. Poverty is recognized as multi-dimensional and complex and as a cross-cutting theme linked to social integration and employment. **As a priority, parliaments should:**

- **Work with governments and civil society to elaborate measurements, criteria and indicators for determining the extent and distribution of poverty, especially absolute poverty and to identify particularly vulnerable groups. Each country should develop a precise definition and assessment of absolute poverty;**

- **Ensure that governments formulate and implement national poverty eradication plans to address poverty at all levels of society. Such plans should contain timeframes and specific gender-sensitive measures to reduce poverty and income inequalities, and should make the eradication of absolute poverty their priority;**

- **Undertake regular national reviews of economic policies and national budgets to assess their impact on poverty and inequality and how they affect women, and to orient them towards poverty eradication;**

- **Encourage governments to establish policies, objectives and measurable targets to enhance women's economic opportunities and their access to productive resources so as to curb the growing trend of feminization of poverty.**

(b) Actions to be taken in order to achieve the goal of full employment

13. The WSSD reached consensus on the importance of full and adequately remunerated employment as an effective method of combating poverty and promoting social integration. Five tenets form the basis of action: the centrality of employment in socio-economic policy; the vital role of education and training; the quality of work; the recognition that more must be done to make employment available to people with special needs; and a reassessment of the nature of work and employment. **For their part, parliaments should:**

- **Ensure that governments pursue active policies for full, productive, freely chosen and adequately remunerated employment and that such policies are at the centre of economic and social policy;**

- **Encourage governments to involve trade unions and employers' organizations in the formulation of labour and employment policies;**

- **Call for the closest collaboration between the ministries in charge of economic and financial affairs and those in charge of labour and employment affairs in formulating and implementing policies;**

- **Verify that appropriate social safety mechanisms are established to minimize the adverse effects of structural adjustment, stabilization or reform programmes, and monitor the impact of trade and investment liberalization on employment in the national context;**

- **Also verify that mechanisms are established to monitor, on a periodic basis, the employment performance of the economy and to redirect, as necessary, policies towards the goal of full employment;**

- **Establish legal frameworks to foster the development of co-operative enterprises, well-defined educational priorities and effective investment in education and training systems; ensure women's access to credit and provide incentives for small and medium-size enterprises;**

- **Ensure that workers' basic rights are safeguarded, and that governments set target dates for eliminating all forms of child labour. To this end, ensure that relevant ILO conventions are ratified if this has not already been done, and that national legislation is enacted to enable the full implementation of international labour standards, in particular, to guarantee the respect for freedom of association, freedom from forced labour and freedom from discrimination;**

- **Ensure that governments develop and implement policies designed to provide improved working conditions including occupational safety and health conditions;**

- **Encourage governments to establish schemes which promote lifelong learning, provide full and equal access to training opportunities, secure the access of women to training programmes, and offer incentives for public and private sectors to provide continuous training. These measures are particularly important in the context of volatile jobs and labour markets;**

- **Ensure that governments broaden employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and that laws do not discriminate against such persons.**

(c) Actions to be taken in order to achieve the goal of social integration

14. The WSSD set the aim of creating " a society for all" in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity, social justice, democratic participation and the rule of law. **To reach these objectives, parliaments should:**

- **Ensure a legal framework which encourages the formation of constructive civil society organizations and allows organizations of civil society to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies related to social development;**

- **Ensure that governments establish the necessary bodies and procedures so that decisions are taken on the basis of accurate data and with the participation of those who will be affected;**

- **Enact appropriate laws, ratify international instruments and monitor their implementation in order to combat all forms of discrimination;**

- **Establish and strengthen machinery such as ombudsmen and parliamentary commissions for monitoring and resolving disputes and conflicts related to discriminatory practices at the local and national level;**

- **Ensure that governments introduce specific policies and social service programmes to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence in society, with particular emphasis on violence against women, children, older persons, people with disabilities and disadvantaged sections of the society.**

Section 3. Monitoring, review and appraisal of follow-up action at the national and international level

15. The Summit in Copenhagen recognized that the primary responsibility to create a positive environment for social development and effective follow-up to the WSSD lies at the national level. However, the responsibility of the international community and the role of inter-governmental mechanisms in creating the necessary legal and economic environment and in mobilizing resources at the international level cannot be underestimated.

16. The Summit recognized the UN General Assembly as the principal policy-making and appraisal organ at the inter-governmental level for matters relating to the follow-up to the Summit and asked the General Assembly to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Summit's outcome. Organizations of the United Nations system were given special responsibilities in that context.

17. In order to facilitate the monitoring process, a number of targets have been developed by different international fora. These include:

- **The proportion of people living in extreme poverty (on less than $370 per annum) should be reduced by at least one half by 2015;**

- **There should be universal primary education in all countries by 2005;**

- **Progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women should be demonstrated by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005;**

- **The death rate for infants and children under the age of five should be reduced by two-thirds of the 1990 level by 2010, and maternal mortality should be reduced by three-fourths during this same period;**

- **Access through primary health care to reproductive health, including reliable family planning methods, should be available to all no later than 2015;**

- **There should be a current national strategy for sustainable development, in the process of implementation, in each country by 2005, so as to ensure that**

current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at global and national levels by 2015.

18. However, it must be recognized that the output targets mentioned above cannot be attained by developing countries without provision of additional resources, better access to trade and transfer of technology.

19. Obviously, the process of monitoring, review and appraisal must start at the national level. **For this process to advance, parliaments should :**

- **Set up, strengthen or co-ordinate the work of appropriate parliamentary bodies responsible for social development questions and place the monitoring, appraisal and review of the implementation of the WSSD's outcome at the centre of their work;**

- **Ensure that governments formulate comprehensive cross-sectoral strategies for implementing the Social Summit's outcome with specific responsibilities and with agreed priorities and time frames and develop or adopt measurable targets;**

- **Strengthen implementation mechanisms, including arrangements for the participation of civil society in policy-making;**

- **Make full use of the mechanisms available to them, including enquiries, public hearings and the requiring of periodic reports from the relevant ministries to ensure that correct policies and priorities are adopted and followed, and assess regularly national progress in implementing the outcome of the Summit by similar means;**

- **Analyse and review through appropriate parliamentary bodies the impact of macroeconomic, microeconomic and sectoral policies on poverty, employment, social integration and social development, and assess the extent, distribution and characteristics of poverty, unemployment, social tension and social exclusion;**

- **Ensure that governments submit to parliaments periodic national reports outlining the successes, problems and obstacles encountered in implementing the outcome of the Summit and that, having incorporated the views of parliaments, governments transmit the reports to the United Nations by the middle of 1999 for the preparation of the first overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Summit's platform by the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to be convened in the year 2000;**

- **Also ensure that national reporting does not cease with the Special Session, but that it continues during the UN Decade for Eradication of Poverty (1997 - 2006) and beyond.**

Section 4. Follow-up action by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

20. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, as the world organization of parliaments, has the responsibility to support action by national parliaments. Therefore, the Inter-Parliamentary Council:

- **Urges all member parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to implement the foregoing recommendations;**
- **Invites member parliaments to study the commitments and the Plan of Action of the WSSD with a view to (a) identifying additional actions which may be taken by parliaments, (b) defining the measures for implementation which the recommendations of the Summit require in view of each country's particular situation, and (c) advancing thinking on the issues which were left open at the WSSD;**
- **Requests the Secretary General to conduct periodic enquiries with member parliaments of the IPU on action taken by parliaments to implement these recommendations;**
- **Requests the IPU Committee for Sustainable Development that it monitor and evaluate such action;**
- **Requests the Secretary General to disseminate widely information gathered on action taken by national parliaments and the IPU to implement the results of the WSSD, in particular by communicating them to the United Nations Commission on Social Development;**
- **Requests the Executive Committee to study, when discussing the future activities of the Union, the possibility of convening, in co-operation with the relevant inter-governmental and regional inter-parliamentary organizations, regional and/or sub-regional meetings to promote parliamentary follow-up of the results of the WSSD;**
- **Invites the Executive Committee to consider including the issue of social development and specific aspects thereof when preparing the agendas of statutory Conferences;**
- **Recognizes the usefulness of convening other tri-partite meetings on follow-up to major United Nations Conferences and Summits in general and to the present recommendations in particular;**
- **Affirms its commitment to develop the Union's advisory services and technical co-operation programmes which aim at building the capacity of parliaments, thus enabling them to play their role more effectively in achieving the goals of social development.**

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND

The IPU contributed extensively to the preparation and holding of the World Summit for Social Development as well as to its immediate follow-up. These contributions included a resolution entitled *"International co-operation and national action to support social and economic development and efforts to combat poverty: Contribution of parliaments to the World Summit for Social Development"* adopted by the 92nd Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Copenhagen in September 1994, a *"Message to the WSSD"* presented by the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council in his address to the Summit, a *"Parliamentarians' Day"* organized in Copenhagen on the occasion of the Summit and a resolution entitled *"Strategies for effective implementation of national and international commitments adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen"* adopted by the 94th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Bucharest in October 1995.

In early 1996, the IPU's governing bodies considered it timely to establish a set of concrete priority actions and steps to be taken directly and indirectly by national parliaments for the effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Summit. To that end, and to provide an occasion to contribute to enhanced co-operation between parliaments, governments and inter-governmental organizations in the follow-up to the Summit, the Inter-Parliamentary Council decided at its 158th session held in Istanbul in April 1996 to organize, in co-operation with the United Nations Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme, a **Tri-Partite Meeting of parliamentary, governmental and inter-governmental representatives**. This meeting was also foreseen as a first concrete expression of the new and closer co-operation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union which the United Nations General Assembly called for in its resolution 50/15 and which led to the signing of an agreement between the two Organizations on 24 July 1996.

The meeting took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 5 and 6 September 1996 and was attended by: (i) **Members of Parliaments**: Mr. Nelson Chitty La Roche (Venezuela), Ms. Viola Furubjelke (Sweden), President of the meeting, Mr. Bonaya Godana (Kenya), Mr. Fouad Mbazza (Tunisia) and Mr. P. Upendra (India); (ii) **Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York**: Mr. Ahmed Kamal (Pakistan), Mr. Benny Kimberg (Denmark), Mr. Mathias Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Mr. René Valéry Mongbé (Benin) and Mr. Danilo Türk (Slovenia); (iii) **Senior representatives of inter-governmental organizations**: Mr. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development; Mr. Hirofumi Ando, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund; Mr. Stephen Lewis, Deputy Executive Director and Ms. Farida Ali, Section Chief, International Organizations and Inter-Agency Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund; Mr. Shabbir Cheema, Director, Management Development and Governance Division, United Nations Development Programme; Mr. Armeane Choksi, Vice-President, The World Bank; and Mr. David Freedman, Director of the Liaison Office in New York, International Labour Organisation.